

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, Japan*

*Released on behalf of the Okinawa Joint Public Epidemiological Action Center for Health (JPEACH)*

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## **Public Health Advisory: Think Before You Ink** *Okinawa JPEACH*

Getting a tattoo has health risks. Since the tattooing process involves piercing the skin with a needle and ink, it naturally carries with it potential health risks such as infection and allergic reactions. In Okinawa, the odds of having a medical complication from tattooing are even higher.

Tattoo establishments in Okinawa and mainland Japan are not regulated or inspected under Japanese law. Active duty personnel and beneficiaries have been sickened, hospitalized and even left with permanent diseases such as Hepatitis C from getting a tattoo in Okinawa. In the United States, tattoo establishments must follow state health regulations and the U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates tattoo inks.

While there are no 100% ‘safe’ tattoo parlors, here are a few specific unsafe practices to be aware of and to watch for when choosing an establishment:

- Sharing or re-using needles between patrons
- Sharing or re-using ink between patrons
- Diluting ink with non-sterile water
- Using ink that is not meant for human use
- Not using gloves
- General uncleanness

Military public health officials in Okinawa recommend avoiding a facility that uses any of the above practices.

“I would not recommend getting a tattoo, but if personnel choose to they should do some careful research before selecting a tattoo facility,” said Director of Public Health at U. S. Naval Hospital

Okinawa. “Take a close look at the facility for cleanliness and observe the artist at work to make sure that the tattooing process is as safe and sterile as possible. And don’t be afraid to ask questions,” he said.

Anyone that becomes sick or has an infection from a tattoo should seek medical attention immediately.

SOFA personnel and family members who notice that a tattoo establishment is using unsafe practices should contact military public health representatives at [nhoki-jpeach@med.navy.mil](mailto:nhoki-jpeach@med.navy.mil).

*The Okinawa Joint Public Epidemiological Action Center for Health (JPEACH) is a joint committee comprised of public health officials from the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy. The JPEACH was established to coordinate public health policy between all services to better serve the needs of the DoD community on Okinawa. The JPEACH also collaborates with the Government of Japan and Okinawa Prefectural Government on public health issues that affect both U. S. military installations and the local community.*